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Cuba Reported To Store Deadly Chemical Arms

Top-secret intelligence reports indicate that some of the Russians' deadly trichothecene toxin, or T2, which has killed thousands in Afghanistan and Indochina, is stored in Cuba for possible use against the United States.

Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. first brought the suspicions of Soviet chemical-biological weapons use into the open in his West Berlin speech last week. It was official confirmation of my March 1980 report on evidence of this terrible form of warfare conducted by the Kremlin and its surrogates.

CIA sources told my associate Dale Van Atta that T2 was the primary element in the mysterious "yellow rain" that brought painful death to tribesmen in Afghanistan, Laos and Cambodia. The lethal substance, dropped like crop dust over inaccessible mountain and jungle areas, brought convulsions, bleeding from every body opening and quick death.

The intelligence community at first suspected nerve gas as the deadly agent. But nerve gas would not have produced the hemorrhaging. Then, early this year, actual samples were obtained by the CIA

and the Defense Intelligence Agency. They identified the "yellow rain" as T2, derived from deadly bread molds that are widespread in the Soviet Union.

A top-secret report to President Reagan from the Joint Chiefs of Staff warned: "[T]here is significant evidence that the Soviets and their allies have used toxic chemical weapons in Southeast Asia and Afghanistan, and the 1979 Sverdlovsk incident revealed what we believe to be Soviet activities with deadly biological weapons." The Russians explained the Sverdlovsk incident, which reportedly killed hundreds, as an outbreak of anthrax from a chemical-biological weapons plant following an accident.

The joint chiefs warned that even small nations appear to have chemical warfare capabilities. If, as the latest intelligence reports suggest, Fidel Castro has supplies of T2 in Cuba, it poses a serious threat to our security. It would also explain Castro's repeated threats to send diseases into the United States if we meddled in Cuban affairs.

DIA analysts heard credible testimony from a former Cuban army lieutenant who defected during the refugee exodus last year. He said he had spent nearly three years in a 376-man chemical warfare battalion and had been an instructor in chemical-biological weapons.

His testimony was chilling. He said he was trained by Soviet in-

structors and used sophisticated Soviet equipment. "During training," he told his DIA interrogators, "pictures of United States cities were shown as possible chemical and biological weapons targets."

The Cuban officer said he was told that toxin strategically placed in Mississippi could contaminate fully one-third of the United States.

The lieutenant was not able to identify any of the poisons he was trained to use as T2; the Soviet instructors were not specific as to the makeup of the various chemical and biological agents. He did say the biological weaponry included "the use of insects, germs and bacteria using rats and flies, roaches and contamination of fills and water sources through the use of capsules, etc."